

Written in Winter

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Category: Frozen, How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Drama

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-02-02 18:58:30

Updated: 2015-11-05 03:46:44

Packaged: 2016-04-26 16:39:55

Rating: T

Chapters: 11

Words: 8,856

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: "Elsa." An unfamiliar voice called her name. "What are you so afraid of?" "Who are you?" "You don't have to be alone, Elsa." (Frozen/Tangled/Rise of the Guardians/Brave/How to Train Your Dragon)

1. Prologue

Words echoed through her mind, taunting her and ushering her forward. She didn't belong there, and she never had. Her sister knew it, her kingdom knew it, and most of all; she knew it. There had been a time when she thought that maybe she had been wrong about herself, that she could change. It was a dream rooted in false hope. Since returning to Arendelle the darkness inside of her had only grown stronger, and darkness is not a thing easily concealed. That villager had been the breaking point; the cold skin, the black hair slowly fading to white, the expression of disbelief burning itself into her memory. That face haunted her, and accident or not, that face would continue to haunt her. She was not meant to be surrounded by people who loved her and believed in her, no matter how long she had been wishing for it to be so. Her entire life was full of nothing but unanswered questions, and it had finally come to a point where she was not certain what was reality and what was a lie. There was only one thing the Queen of Arendelle knew for certain. She was meant to be alone.

It was night when she set out, with only the stars as her companions. She took off running, but eventually slowed to a brisk walk as she reached the outer edges of her territory. She was not fit to be Queen. Raising an arm, she took the crown off her head and threw it behind her in one fluid motion. After that she only paused to erase her footsteps. This time she had to be sure she would not be followed. The familiarity of the situation astounded her, and yet she couldn't believe how different the circumstances had become. She tried to leave her memories with the wind, but one thought kept pushing her. It was the same thought that had ruined her only a year before, spoken by the one person in the world she truly loved. It had

driven her to insanity in mere seconds, all control escaping from her body, and for one entire year those words plagued her mind and caused the darkness to grow.

_ "Elsa, please, I can't live like this anymore!" Anna's eyes were brimming with tears as she gripped the glove belonging to her sister, as if she believed her hold on the glove would serve as a tight hold on Elsa._

_ There were tears in the Queen's eyes as well, as the entirety of the only world she had ever known shattered to pieces. 'Conceal, don't feel.' She chided herself. "Then leave." _

_ The horrified expression on Anna's face proved to her that she had said the wrong, yet somehow right, thing. The Queen of Arendelle turned away before she could see the horror on her sister's face turn to anger._

_ "What did I ever do to you?" Her voice raised considerably. Several nobles turned at stared at the unfolding scene._

_ Elsa knew she had to leave. "Enough, Anna." _

_ "No! Why? Why do you shut me out? W-why do you shut the world out? What are you so afraid of?" _

_ That was it. "I said ENOUGH!" Everything was over. She left._

All this time, and she had never forgotten. "Get a hold of yourself. You're being ridiculous." She took a deep breath, and continued to trudge on. "What are you so afraid of?" She laughed quietly. "What does she know?"

"Elsa." An unfamiliar voice called her name. "What are you so afraid of?"

She stopped in her tracks and slowly turned around. Elsa desperately turned her head from side to side, looking for the source of that cruel voice. "Who said that? Who are you?"

She heard a short laugh and began to back away slowly.

"What is the Queen of Arendelle doing out alone at night?"

"I want to be alone." She mentally reprimanded herself. Her voice was so shaky even she didn't believe herself. "Leave me alone."

She could almost feel the presence smirk. "You want to be alone? Fine. Be alone."

"Wait!" Elsa yelled out before she could stop herself. "Who are you?"

For a moment, everything was silent. She couldn't hear anything but the sounds of her own breathing. She frantically looked around once more, hoping whoever was there hadn't left. Something about that voice had been almost enticing. Suddenly, her eyes caught movement to the left of her and a tall man stepped out of the shadows.

"You don't have to be alone, Elsa."

2. Chapter One: Anna

"Kristoff!" The princess yelled out, running through the halls of the castle. "Kristoff! Where are you?" She continued to run, worry plaguing her better judgement. She knew if she had Elsa's noble way, she wouldn't have made a big scene of her discovery, and would rather approach those in need in a dignified and subtle manner. However, she was not her sister.

"Anna?" Kristoff, and several other nobles looked up from the breakfast table. Granted, many of them did not think much of this as Anna had been known to be a tad dramatic from time to time.

"I need to talk to you. Privately." The words were short and frank. Her fiance rose from the chair he had been occupying and quickly walked towards her. He knew her well enough to know when something was truly wrong. They stepped out into the hallway and Anna silently dragged him to the large bedroom the Queen usually occupied.

She turned to him. "What do you see?"

"I see a door."

The princess made a big show of rolling her eyes. "Open it."

He opened the door with caution, slightly afraid Elsa would be standing behind it with a snowball. He shivered. It wouldn't be the first time that happened. Instead what he found was nothing. Aside from the furniture, that is. The Queen's bed was neatly made and the curtains lay closed. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

"It's empty." He said finally.

"Exactly."

"Anna, I don't understand."

She sighed loudly and fell into a heap on the floor. "She's not here, Kristoff. She's not in the village, she's not in the castle, and she's not in her bedroom."

"Well, what do you think that means?" He was perplexed. "Did she run away?"

"No!" Anna would not have it. "She was happy here. She was loved. Why would she leave that? There's only one explanation for it."

The princess held out a small package loosely wrapped in a silk cloth. Kristoff delicately unwrapped the cloth, revealing a shining crown belonging to none other than the Queen of Arendelle.

"What does that mean?" He picked up Elsa's crown and inspected it.

Anna shrugged. "A few workers found it outside. No footprints were found by it, which can only mean one thing. Elsa was kidnapped. And I intend to find her."

The pair let a silence sink between them. The man sank to the floor next to Anna, not believing what he was hearing. Ever since Elsa had almost been the death of his fiance a year ago, there had been a rift between the Queen and the ice harvester. And yet it seemed that once more the mysterious Queen would endanger the life of Anna once again. "I won't let you go alone."

Anna wasn't oblivious to the shaky relationship between her fiance and her sister. She had expected this reaction from him, and was well prepared for it. "I never planned on going alone. I would like you to come with me, of course, but if you don't want to I understand. I sent word to my cousin and her husband of Elsa's kidnapping. They both agreed to help find her. They'll arrive in a week's time."

Kristoff laughed softly. He should've known Anna would be well prepared for whatever he threw at her. "Where do you think we should look?"

"We?" Anna smiled and punched his shoulder. "As in big, tough mountain man is agreeing to help?" His scowl made Anna giggle, but the sound of Elsa's crown hitting the floor brought her back to reality. Kristoff must have dropped it when she had punched him. "When I racked my brain for the enemies of Arendelle, only one seemed capable of pulling this off. The thing that struck me as most unusual was the lack of footsteps."

Kristoff was starting to understand where this was going. "So it had to be someone with means to travel by air, without touching the ground. That's the only way to keep up such a clean getaway."

"Exactly! And there is only one place I can think of with means of travel like that. Kristoff, have you ever heard of Berk?"

3. Chapter Two: Jack

The sound of North cracking his knuckles reverberated throughout the entire North Pole. Tooth flittered around anxiously while Sandy's pictures danced around, entertaining the Yetis.

"Where is 'e?" Bunnymund impatiently tapped his foot against the ground. "Why do we always invite 'im if he's just gonna show up late?"

"We invite him because he's a guardian, Bunny. Being late is just a bad habit he has to work on, I guess." Tooth had a rambling tone to her voice. It was obvious to each of them she was excited. None of them had seen Jack Frost in a while. "He'll show up."

"Well, he better show up soon." North leaned against a control panel in the center of the room. "The Man in the Moon has a message for us. It's important."

"Yeah, well 'e better 'urry up an—" A snowball hit Bunnymund in the side of the head.

Jack smirked. "Miss me?"

"Jack!" Tooth smiled and Baby Tooth flew in circles around Jack's head happily.

"Nice of ya to join us, Frost." North grumbled, turning his attention the newly arrived guardian. "I thought we talked about this."

"I got held up. I promised Jaime I'd visit today." He patted Sandy on his head, several specks of glitter flying around him. "So, onto business. What are we doing here? Christmas is over, so it can't be we're picking up your slack again, North."

Bunnymund muttered something angrily under his breath. "Just because you don't have a major holidayâ€|"

Tooth narrowed her eyes. "Now, now, boys, we've got real work to do."

North sent her a thankful nod. He turned towards the ancient stone in the middle of the room, and motioned for the ceiling to open. Everyone watched in silence as gentle moonbeams fell from the sky and cast a silvery glow across everything. Nothing was more beautiful, however, then the way to moon reacted to that stone. Swirling lights danced to make a picture, slowing forming a translucent image of a tall, dark figure.

Sandy covered his eyes, as if the image was too much for him. Tooth gasped in horror, and a grave face painted itself on the rest of the guardians.

Jack couldn't raise his voice above a whisper. "Pitch."

"The Man in the Moon has warned that our greatest enemy is once again on the move. So far, he has committed no great crime, but he has been picking up pace ever since crossing the kingdom of Arendelle. This leads me to believe that Pitch Black has found himself an accomplice." Each word North spoke grew darker than the last. They had all dealt with Pitch before, and this was no laughing matter.

"What makes you think he has an accomplice?" Bunnymund quirked an eyebrow. The old man was stretching his imagination a little too far.

"The Queen of Arendelle is missing. She was reported missing around the same time Pitch crossed into that kingdom. There is no doubt the Queen is with Pitch, whether by kidnapping or by choice." North sighed and looked at Jack with what could be interpreted as a pitiful expression. "Jack, I would like you to go to Arendelle. Talk to the Princess, ask her about her sister, offer an explanation of where she is."

It didn't take a detective to understand this was not Jack's ideal assignment. "So you're sending me to this place to just console the Queen's sister?"

"This is more of aâ€|" North knew he had to choose his next words very carefully. "Special interest case. The Queen of Arendelle is known for having ice magic. Magic very similar to yours, Jack. Let's not forget how Pitch attempted to recruit you to his side last time. I believe he may have done the same to the Queen. If that is the

case, perhaps someone gifted with the same magic as she would be the best to bring her back to the light. "

"She has powers like me?" Jack had never come across anyone with powers such as his. And he wasn't sure if he should be happy, or afraid. If someone with his powers was on Pitch's side, then what use was he? "Fine. I'll go to Arendelle, and I'll do my best to find the Queen."

"Thank you, Jack." North smiled.

"So, what's this 'Snow Queen's' name?"

North smiled again. "Elsa."

"Elsa," Jack whispered only to himself.

_Elsa. _

4. Chapter Three: Merida

"This is an outrage!" King Fergus' booming voice echoed through the halls, shaking the castle. "How dare they accuse our greatest ally of kidnapping!"

Queen Elinor looked at her husband with sad eyes, but brightened them considerably as she turned to her guests. "I'm sure all will be well. Just send word to Arendelle that you have not seen Queen Elsa, and that you mean her no harm."

"No!" Stoick's voice echoed just as harshly as Fergus'. "This is the final straw! I will not take any more abuse from those stiff, high-society nations! Our dragons are fully tamed and under our control, and each and every member of our village reports to me before they do anything drastic! If Elsa had been kidnapped, I would know about it!"

They were sitting in the grand hall belonging to King Fergus and Queen Elinor, the rulers of Dunbroch. Stoick, village chieftain of Berk, had brought news of accusation. Berk had been contacted by Princess Anna of Arendelle. That was cause enough for Berk and Dunbroch to have a meeting. However, the letter contained accusation of kidnap and betrayal. That was cause enough for war.

"Why don't we talk this through, Stoick." Queen Elinor pleaded. She knew both her husband and the chieftain to be quick to anger. "We'll figure something out."

"Oh yeah, I'm sure the people of Arendelle will just love to talk to them with their mangy dragons breathing all over the place; settin' everything on fire!"

"Merida!"

All eyes turned to the bright red hair splayed about wildly. Equipped with a bow in one hand, and an apple raised to her mouth with the other, Princess Merida of Dunbroch was the picture of femininity and ladylike grace. She had entered the room from behind, and next to her was a gangly boy with shaggy brown hair.

"What's that supposed to mean?" The boy next to her obviously did not take well to her comment. "Our dragons aren't mangy, they're our friends!"

"Yeah, you are all the picture of cleanliness, aren't ya?" She fired back, giving his shoulder a little shove to go with the verbal insult.

"Look who's talking! You can't even chew with your mouth closed!"

"Well, your name is Hiccup! I get those when I drink too much!"

The boy fell silent. He had only known this girl for an hour, and already she made him want to punch someone in the face. If only he had the upper body strength.

"Have fun on your tour?" Elinor tried to hold a smile. She should have known better than to let Merida give him the tour. If Dunbroch and Berk were to hold a lasting alliance, it was essential that the future leaders get along. This part didn't seem to be going very well.

"Yeah, ma, it was great." Merida made a final face at Hiccup before taking her place next to her mother.

Fortunately, this would be considered normal behavior in Berk, so Stoick thought nothing of the peculiar way his son and the princess were acting towards each other. If he was asked, he would've thought they were participating in friendly banter. "So, back onto the matter of war—"

"Oh, come on, dad." Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Not another one of your wars."

"I think I liked him better when he wasn't here." Fergus scowled. A citizen from Berk who didn't like war was like a citizen from Dunbroch who didn't like his bear stories. They simply didn't exist.

"I agree." Elinor smiled at Hiccup. "Perhaps war isn't the answer. Why don't I go to Arendelle as a representative, to assure them that both of our kingdoms are innocent."

"Go alone?" Fergus would not have it.

"You need to stay here to run the kingdom, dear. And I won't be alone." The Queen hesitated for a moment, something foreign to her. "I'll bring Merida."

"With all due respect, I can't just send you to represent both of our lands. Take my boy with you. He'll serve as an envoy." Stoick ushered Hiccup forward.

"Then it's settled. Merida, Hiccup, and I will go to Arendelle. We leave in the morning."

The Princess waved her hand. "Open up the gates."

A guard nodded, and signaled for his comrades to do the same. For a short while, the gates had remained open. They had been closed now for six consecutive days, ever since Queen Elsa had been discovered missing. Today, however, the castle was expected to receive a very special visitor.

"You seem really calm, Anna." His gruff voice whispered in her ear. Anna jumped and punched him lightly in the shoulder, all the while laughing.

"Don't scare me like that!" She grinned at him. Her mood had improved significantly in the past few days, her sadness into hope and her disbelief into determination. "But I am excited, I haven't seen her since the coronation!"

Kristoff rubbed his arm. He had forgotten scaring Anna always came with a price. "Well, I've never met her. Is she pretty?"

Her fiance received another punch in the arm. "Kristoff!"

"Kidding, kidding!" He raised his arms in surrender.

The pout that had taken over her features dissipated. "And anyway, she's married." She looked as if she was going to say something more, but at that moment a distant sound of wheels stole her attention. "They're here!"

Sure enough, it seemed a carriage was heading towards the castle, led by a magnificent white horse. Anna beamed with excitement, and she was bouncing on the balls of her feet, a sure sign she was trying to contain her emotion. The horse was fast, leaving Anna to endure only a few moments of hyperactive anxiety. The door of the carriage slammed open, and a bare foot found its way out in the open before the rest of her body appeared.

"Anna!" A girl with shoulder length brown hair and expressive green eyes attacked the Princess of Arendelle with a vicious hug. "I missed you!"

Anna smiled. "I missed you too! Your hair has gotten really long!"

"Tell me about it." A tall man stepped out of the carriage next, with a small chameleon resting atop his brown hair. "I swear, Rapunzel is trying to grow that obnoxiously long hair back."

"Eugene! I am not!" The Queen of Corona pouted, a facial expression that made her look much like her younger cousin. "But you have to admit, it made a great adventuring tool."

"That's up for debate." The man flashed a devious smile, a look that suited him well. The chameleon on his head smiled as well, before jumping off and climbing on to Kristoff. The dark-haired man stuck his hand out to Kristoff. "And you are?"

"Oh!" Anna giggled excitedly. "This is my fiance, Kristoff! Kristoff, this is my cousin Rapunzel, Queen of Corona. And that guy is her

husband, Flynn- er, Eugene. Actually, I'm not really sure what to call him."

"His name is Eugene!"

The King interrupted his wife. "Flynn is fine." He shook Kristoff's hand, and scooped the chameleon from his head. "Sorry about Pascal, he'sâ€¦ difficult."

Kristoff nodded, but he couldn't help but stare at Anna and Rapunzel. The resemblance between them was uncanny. "How are you two related, again?"

"She's my cousin." Anna grinned proudly. "Our mothers were sisters. They were both born here in Arendelle, but my aunt Primrose married the young King of Corona and moved there. Mother stayed here, and married my father. Enough talk, though, let's go inside and start the search for Elsa!"

Rapunzel nodded and skipped forward, but Flynn grabbed her arm, stopping her in her tracks. His previous look of mischief had been replaced by seriousness. "What about that ship we saw?"

"Oh, you're right." The Queen's face darkened. "Anna, we saw a ship when we were down by the docks earlier."

Kristoff smirked. "That's kind of where ships go."

Rapunzel rolled her eyes. "It wasn't just any ship, blondie. We saw an enemy ship, bearing the flag of Dunbroch."

* * *

><p>AN: If you've stuck with me thus far, I hope that means you like the story :) However, I plan to progress the story very soon and get down to the heart of the adventure. Before I do this, I'd like your input. _**On my profile is a link for a poll asking for which pairings/shippings you support.**_ I don't plan to have this story revolve around romance, but the pairings I decide to use will ultimately decide the outcome of the story. As is with any good story, it should be centered on what the fans want! So if you have time to take this quick little survey just click on my profile. I'd greatly appreciate it!

6. Chapter Five: Elsa

Ever since she had left Arendelle, she had been running. This time was different, however. She didn't know where she was running too. The Queen of Arendelle was tired, but that wasn't what was bothering her. As of right now, she was alone. Already he had broken his promise to her. She had hoped this time would be different. But she was foolish to think so. This man had promised her love, friendship, power, and freedom. But she barely knew anything about him while he seemed to know quite a lot about her. Memories of their meeting danced behind her half-lidded eyes as she struggled to hold onto the promises he had made her.

_ "You don't have to be alone, Elsa." _

_As he stepped out of the shadows, her fear intensified. "Who are you?" This man was tall and dark; a dangerous aura surrounding him. "What do you want with me?" _

_Why, I simply want the same thing you desire. A friend. Someone who understands me, someone who I can understand in return." _

_And what makes you think you can understand me? You don't know anything about me!" Elsa was scared. The fear wasn't of the man, though, it was of the words he spoke. _

_He smiled bitterly. "I know a lot about you. You're a Queen. You have a younger sister, no parents. You're afraid to love her, to be near her. You're afraid of a lot of things, my Queen." _

_How do you know all this?" _

_There is one thing I always know, Elsa." _

_She hesitated, but decided she couldn't let her fear show. Don't let it show. "And what is that?" _

_People's greatest fears." _

_She furrowed her delicate brows. "What are you?" _

_My name is Pitch Black. Some call me the Boogeyman. If I am correct, you have come to know me by the name of Busemann. Others call me the devil." _

_The control over her fear she has been trying so hard to keep vanished. "Theâ€| the devil?" _

_A light smirk appeared on his face. "Just because I've been called that doesn't mean that I am that. I know you've been called a monster, and I don't believe that's what you are. Though based on your recent actions, I'm not so sure." _

_Don't talk about that. It was an accident." _

_Oh Elsa, we all have things we're ashamed of. That's why you need someone to help get you through. Someone who understands you. Someone like me." _

_But you're evil! I'm not- I don't thinkâ€| I'm not evil!" _

_And neither am I. I'm criticized and feared for simply doing what I was made to do. Join me. Together we can do great things." _

_She was lost. His words were so tempting, and yet the look on his face told her to run from him. She needed a friend; someone who would understand her. "Leave me alone. I don't want to hurt you."

-

_Don't you see?" He laughed softly. "You can't hurt me. I cannot die." _

And just like that, she was following the shadows. They led her to him, and together they would be great. She had found her friend- her crutch, her ally. They could live together in peace and the Queen

would never be afraid of hurting anyone again. Not Anna, not her people, no one.

"Well, I see you've made it here safely."

"Pitch!" Her previous doubts of the dark man were no longer visible in her eyes. "Where exactly is here?"

He swept his eyes across the field. "My lair. Well, the entrance to it. You must be tired. Unfortunately, we have no time to rest."

"But I just got here."

Once again a smirk dusted his lips. "Yes, I realize this. However, I'm afraid we're being followed."

7. Chapter Six: Jack

When Jack finally arrived in Arendelle, he was greeted by the sight of armor and swords. Though thankfully, not pointed at him. Honestly, the invisible boy doubted anyone would see him at all. No one usually did. As he shifted his gaze, he saw the swords were pointed in the direction of the marina, and the guards were running towards it. About the same time, a gangly boy with freckles and brown hair was ducked behind a slightly terrifying mess of red tangles. Behind the tangles was a snarling face, and a hand reaching for what looked like a hunting bow.

"Merida!" A second woman emerged from inside of a small boat, but this one had noticeably smooth brown hair, twisted into a long braid. Jack internally wondered where his sudden notice of hair had come from. This woman was noticeably older, and her voice held a sternness only acquired through age and position. "Do not draw your weapon!"

"What am I 'sposed to do? Let those jokes rip us apart?" The girl supposedly called Merida snarled.

"Maybe they don't want to rip us apart?" The freckled boy suggested.

The regal woman sighed. "Perhaps we should try the diplomatic approach. Merida, you and Hiccup stay behind me. This is all a simple misunderstanding."

As the guards approached, Merida's hand remained steady on her bow and the woman put on a brave face. Jack wasn't sure what he had flown into, but it was a slight disappointment no one had noticed him hovering there. It surprised him that the woman was able to stay calm the entire time the armed guards surrounded the three misfits, leaving the frigid sea as their only means of escape. A new woman pushed through the guards, with an equally brave look on her face.

"I am Princess Anna of Arendelle. You have some nerve coming here, Queen Elinor." Though she was not armed, her eyes flashed and it was obvious she was going to grant no mercy to these intruders. "Where is my sister?"

Elinor took a deep breath before speaking, choosing her words carefully. "That is why we are here, Princess. We've come to tell that we mean no harm. Neither Dunbroch or Berk has seen Queen Elsa or heard of her whereabouts. We wish to extend a hand of peace, and offer any assistance in the search for your sister."

Anna blinked. "Why should I believe that?"

"Well, ya could throw us in a cell, but yer sister would still be missin'." Merida barked. "If ya want to find her, ya should stop accusin' the wrong people."

A few of the guards gripped their weapons tighter. Anna opened her mouth to speak, but instead, something unexpected happened. She raised her arm and screamed. It was then Jack noticed the princess' hand pointed in the direction of himself.

"There's a man up there!" She screeched.

Jack looked around, realizing the only thing she could be talking about him. He looked back at the crowd of people, noticing all eyes trained on him. A man with dark hair and a small goatee squinted in his direction. "I don't see anything, Princess."

The woman with shoulder-length brown hair and expressive green eyes elbowed the man in the ribcage. "Are you even using your eyes, Eugene? There's a man with white hair floating up there."

Merida snorted. "Riiiiiiight. Well, I'm glad we wandered straight into crazy town. I'll be on me merry way-

The freckled boy stopped her, eyes trained on Jack. "No, they're right. He's up there."

The regal woman, Elinor, had an unreadable expression painted on her face. "I'm starting to wonder if diplomacy is really an option here. And Hiccup, please don't feed into these lies. It's nothing but a distraction tactic."

"But I'm not- there's actually a person up there!" Hiccup retorted.

In front of her, a stocky blond man placed a hand on Princess Anna's shoulder. "Perhaps the stress of losing Elsa has gotten to you. Maybe you should lie down- there's nothing there."

The name 'Elsa' brought Jack back to reality. He had a reason for being here. He tried the deep breathing exercises Sandy had taught him, hoping the salty air would infuse a bit of confidence into his bones. After a moment's hesitation, he slowly let the wind bring him down to the ground, in between the feuding parties. "Hello. I don't know if you can see or hear me, but my name is Jack Frost. And I've been sent to help find Queen Elsa."

8. Chapter Seven: Flynn

Flynn was beginning to believe that this whole 'missing Queen' situation was a hoax designed to humiliate him. He was fine with leaving Corona, and he could deal with Rapunzel's relatives- even the

crazy talking snowman that was emotionally attached to Anna. Kristoff was pretty cool, and he even liked Arendelle. Honestly, Flynn could've handled being bombarded by the envoys from Dunbroch and Berk. It was the invisible man who got him.

He still didn't believe he existed. And the fact that Kristoff didn't see 'Jack' either made Flynn that much more sure that 'Jack' was a trick made up by Anna and Rapunzel to freak them out.

"But Eugene, you have to believe me! He really is real! I swear!" Rapunzel pleaded. "He's sitting at the other end of the table- you're going to hurt his feelings."

Flynn couldn't help himself- he rolled his eyes. "It's kind of hard for me to hurt an imaginary creature's feelings, Rapunzel."

"But he's not imaginary! Come on, why would I lie to you? Hiccup sees him too!"

He froze. That was the one thing that made him only slightly inclined to believe her story. What motivation would the Berkling have to play along? Everyone knew that Berk and Corona didn't get along, and they haven't since before Rapunzel's parents ruled the kingdom. He had heard the story of why many times before, but truth be told he never really paid attention to all the royal gossip. He knew the outcome was feuding countries, and that was enough for Flynn. And because Corona and Arendelle had strong ties, it was only natural for Arendelle to hate Berk too. So why would Hiccup go along with a story contrived by the royalty of two enemy countries? It didn't make sense. Then again neither did a man who could fly, wielded a magic staff, and who was only visible to those willing to believe in his existence.

Anna slid into the chair on the other side of him, supposedly grinning at something 'Jack had just said.' Flynn decided the joke was going a little too far.

"Look, it's not funny anymore, ok?"

Rapunzel and Anna sighed simultaneously. The look they gave each other was almost humorous, but Flynn dared not laugh. "You just have to believe that-" Anna started, before sighing again. "All right, how about this. Do you believe in the Easter Bunny?"

Flynn blinked. "No?"

Rapunzel jumped in. "How about the Tooth Fairy?"

"Again, no. I refuse to believe there is a magical creature with a molar fetish. "

"Santa?" Anna asked, hopeful.

"Seriously?" Flynn's laugh echoed throughout the dining hall. "If I don't believe in the Tooth Fairy, what makes you think I believe in Santa Claus?"

Anna nudged Rapunzel, whispering not so quietly. "I think your husband is a lost cause."

"What about Kristoff? He doesn't believe either!" Rapunzel rebutted.

"Yeah, well neither do Merida or Queen Elinor. The only other person we've got on our side is Hiccup." The Princess of Arendelle had a slight pout etched into her features.

Flynn sighed audibly. It was like the two females had forgotten about his existence. Unsurprisingly, this was not the first time it had happened since his arrival the night before. Sure, the cousins had been excited to see each other, but their bond only grew when they realized they made up two-thirds of the believers in 'Jack.' Ever since then, there had only been whispers between the two. It kind of annoyed Flynn, and it definitely annoyed his newfound friend Kristoff.

"Hey, speaking of which, what did you end up doing with the intruders?" Rapunzel inquired.

And convenient to the events unfolding, as if by a charm, Hiccup himself walked in to the dining hall. "Hiya."

Anna smiled. "Is everything ready to go?"

Hiccup nodded. "I've scrounged enough supplies to last us a week or two. I've got Toothless resting up, too."

"Perfect!" Rapunzel exclaimed, latching on to Anna's arm excitedly. "I've got my stuff all packed up as well. Eugene's too."

The mention of his name forced Flynn to process the conversation he had just witnessed. "Wait, what?"

"Nothing, don't worry about it." Anna said, perhaps a bit too nonchalant.

"No, it's definitely something." Flynn urged. "You may as well spill the beans, Princess. If it involves me, I should have the right to know."

"Uhâ€|" Anna hesitated. A few different emotions flashed across her face, leaving the end expression a cross between confusion and scheming. As a reformed thief, he knew that look well. "You're not guaranteed the same rights in Arendelle. You don't get to know." The awkward laugh that followed her statement made Flynn absolutely sure she was lying.

"Do I dare ask what's going on in here?" Kristoff asked, striding into the dining hall. He went to take a seat at the head of the table, only to be screamed at by Anna, Rapunzel, and Hiccup.

"You can't sit there!" Hiccup yelled. "That's where Jack is."

Kristoff squinted at the chair before shrugging and taking a seat at the chair next to 'Jack's'. "Anna, are you trying to trick people into going to prison again?"

Her face following that comment was surely a sight. "That was one time!"

"Then why are you lying to Flynn? As a foreign guest, he's actually offered more protection under the laws of Arendelle."

"All right, enough lies!" Rapunzel shouted above the commotion. "It's no use keeping it a secret anymore, Anna. They'll just figure it out. Eugene, Kristoff, we have some news. Hiccup, Anna, Jack, and I have been doing some talking, and we decided that we aren't going to be able to find Elsa sitting around in the castle. So, we're going to go find her. Together. Tomorrow."

"Who's going to watch over the kingdom?" Kristoff asked.

"I've put Queen Elinor in charge while we're gone." Anna said confidently.

Kristoff scoffed. "You really think that's a good idea? Remember what happened last time you put a stranger in charge of Arendelle?"

"Are you still angry about that? Let it go already! My sister is missing and I'm going to do whatever it takes to bring her back!"

"Oh yeah, because that worked out real well for you last time."

Everyone else in the room inched a little bit closer to the door as Anna's face turned redder with every passing remark. "Excuse me?"

"I think you heard me." Kristoff said, his words laced with anger. "When are you going to stop letting Elsa's decisions rule your life?"

Something about Anna's body language told Flynn it was not the first time the couple had had this argument. "She's my sister, Kristoff! You just don't understand because your family abandoned you!"

But something in Kristoff's reaction told Flynn that what Anna just said was a very, very touchy subject. The group took another synchronized step towards the door.

Anna gasped at the words that had just spilled out of her mouth dawned on her. "Kristoff, I'm so sorry, I-"

"No, no, you meant what you said. Justâ€|" He hesitated for a moment. "Do whatever you want. But don't expect me to come with you this time."

The Princess's face fell. "I understand. Come on, guys, let's go."

But Anna had failed to realize that her friends had already left the room, hoping to escape the crossfire. Her slow, trudging steps out of the dining hall reflected the loneliness she knew all too well.

Adventure would have to wait.

Hiccup was a man who preferred to look on the bright side of life. Sure, he was hundreds of miles away from Berk, from his friends, from Astrid, and his best friend was being treated as if he was a monster simply because he has the ability to destroy things quite easily. And that monstrous redhead was kind of mean. But there were a lot of good things about being sent off from his home without his consent to help locate a Queen he had never met. It was good. Everything was alright. Really. His eyes were drooping and he wanted to leave, but other than that he was fine. On the bright side, he met Jokul Frosti. On the downside, Hiccup was currently taking orders from a horse.

"All right, good boy!" Rapunzel smiled, patting the magnificent white horse on the leg. "You're doing a great job, Maximus! We'll bring Elsa back in no time!"

Maximus whinnied loudly, with a tone only to be described as proud. Hiccup glanced up at Toothless, before directing his attention to the group of people around him. He didn't know what to think of them, so he had labeled them all the Band of Misfits. Of course, Merida had chided him for labeling them something so clichÃ©, but he liked the sound of it. Looking at them, that's what they were.

There was Anna, currently riding around in circles on the back of Toothless, who had taken an unnatural liking to the Princess. It angered him a bit that Toothless had wanted to spend time with Anna and not him, but he supposed it was a good thing that the dragon was beginning to be accepted into the group. Heck, if a talking snowman and a mythical frost lord were, then why couldn't Toothless? It was then he slapped himself. He was getting too caught up in this whole dragon thing. Other places weren't like Berk, and he had to accept that. And to be fair, Olaf and Jack weren't necessarily welcomed with open arms.

His gaze set on Rapunzel who was drawing a map in the sand with Maximus, the huge white horse with an uncanny ability to track scents. Next to her snoring on the ground was Eugene- or Flynn. He still wasn't sure what to call the King of Corona. Splayed across his stomach was the sassy chameleon Pascal, currently the same shade of blue as Flynn's shirt. His horse, Dawson, was tied to a tree and sleeping peacefully. Anna's horse, Marisa, and currently Hiccup's mode of transportation as Toothless was otherwise occupied, was in the same situation. Merida was sleeping on a log, snoring even louder than Flynn. Her horse, Angus, was trotting around the makeshift camp, snorting and whining at every sound. Olaf was sitting next to Hiccup, whispering questions about dragons while he stared intently at the fire Hiccup was poking with a stick.

And then there was Jokul. Er, Jack. That was the real kicker to him. It wasn't the magic talking snowman that got him, or the royalty that surrounded was the man who sat on the other side of the fire who may or may not have been a figment of his imagination. The guy had mostly kept to himself since his original arrival, which was all fine and dandy, but it made it hard to decide if he was imaginary or not. Merida and Flynn still hadn't been able to see Jack, and there was no telling if Kristoff could see Jack. He was a couple of miles away, no doubt brooding in the castle about Anna. Funny thing was, Queen Elinor was still in charge of the kingdom, as she was the only one Anna formally handed control too.

Hiccup cleared his throat, shifting his eyes back to Jack. "So, uhâ€œ you're not going to melt or anything, right?"

"Nope!" Olaf grinned. "Elsa made this itty bitty snow cloud for me, and it follows me wherever I go, so I won't melt! And the best part is- oh. You weren't talking to me, were you?"

Hiccup shook his head 'no.'

"Oh." The snowman chortled. "Well, this is awkward for me."

After deciding the situation was in fact awkward, Olaf meandered over to Rapunzel, and plopped right onto the map she had been working on. Hiccup turned his attention back to Jokul.

The frost lord smiled. "No, you don't have to worry about me melting. I've been around centuries."

"Centuries?" That was news to the future chief.

"So, you're like, really old, right?" Anna called down from the back of Toothless. Neither male had been aware she had been listening in. "I mean, not like that makes you any different or anything! You're just the same as us! Except that you're invisible sometimes. And you can fly! But really, you're just the same."

Jack blinked. "...Right. But yeah, I've been around for a while."

"And you still don't know why Flynn and Merida can't see you?" Hiccup asked.

"No, I know exactly why. They just have to learn to believe in me, and then they'll be able to see me. It's pretty simple, if you think about it." A devious smirk appeared on the pale man's face.

Hiccup gulped. "Uh oh, I know that look. What are you planning?"

But he inquired a moment too late. Jack was already flying above Flynn, forming a snowball in his hand. "I'm going to have a little fun."

And he dropped the snowball onto Flynn's face.

"What the-" Flynn yelled, bolting upright. "Who did that?"

Rapunzel giggled. "It was Jack."

Flynn rolled his eyes. "Oh yeah, it was 'Jack,' huh? Blame it on the invisible-"

Another snowball hit him in the face.

The King of Corona looked around furiously for the source of the snowball, when his eye caught another forming in mid-air. "Oh myâ€œ!"

Hiccup was sure that Flynn would no longer doubt the existence of Jokul Frosti.

Er- Jack Frost.

10. Chapter Nine: Pitch

He could not have found a more perfect ally. Elsa was everything that pitiful frost guardian was and more. For too long darkness and fear had been overshadowed by the magic and false security in the world. Those guardians had been lying to the people of the world for centuries, and Pitch would not have it. Fear ruled all, and that is the way the world was meant to work. Pitch was meant to be the King, and that was his ultimate goal. He had already succeeded in recruiting Elsa to his side, and that was the first step. Every good leader had an assistant, an advisor. And he was going to be hers.

Though the thought pained him, the citizens of the world would not accept him as the unopposed ruler of the world. He was dark and scary, and they wouldn't trust him to take over power. That was why he needed Elsa. She was already a Queen, and Arendelle is where the plan began. He just needed to strike a little fear in her heart. And seeing as practically killing her sister wasn't enough, Pitch had to intervene and stoke the flames of her inner terror once more. He had been there to witness what the Queen had done to that poor little village girl, on accident of course, and that was enough. He had her. She was going to become the figurehead of the new world power, a pretty face and graceful hand to quell the initial fears the mortals would feel. And from the shadows, Pitch would be pulling the strings. He would be the Shadow King, secretly ruling and making the important decisions that Elsa would execute. Her ice magic was simply a bonus.

Now that he had her, it was time to begin building his empire.

"Together, we can do great things." He smiled warmly at her. "Let us start simple. Perhaps creating a new headquarters?"

The Snow Queen blinked. "So we're really not going back?"

"Oh my." He allowed his voice to drawl. "If you want to go back, I won't stop you. Really, I don't know what I'll do without you. It would break my heart. But, if you must."

"No! No, Iâ€¦ I don't want to leave. I can't go backâ€¦ I don't know what I was thinking. I'm sorry." Her voice quavered, a fact that made the corner of Pitch's mouth turn upward. She was afraid.

"No need to apologize, my dear. Fear not. Nothing goes together better than cold and dark. We can create a new world together, and knock those guardians down a few notches."

"Those... what?" Elsa's brow furrowed. "What are you talking about?"

The internal chiding going on in Pitch's mind was very intense. "Forgive me, I got ahead of myself. The guardians are protectors of the realm, but all they really do is lie to people. They take advantage of helpless people, and spread lies of hope and security. Neither of which the guardians can truly provide. I was hoping you

would assist me in making the truth clear. But if you aren't interestedâ€|"

"No, I am! I want to do whatever I can to atone for what I've done. I'll help you. Whatever you need, I'll do it."

His lips curled into a slight smile. "Lovely. Let us begin, shall we?"

"Begin what?"

"I would like us to finish constructing our hideout before our new friend arrives." Pitch waved his hands, and a stream of dark magic appeared in front of him. Elsa just stared at the dark man. "Well, are you going to help or not?"

It took the Queen a few moments to articulate what she was trying to say. "Our new what?"

"Friend, my dear. Now, help me with this."

The next few hours were magical. Literally. Elsa and Pitch worked in flawless sync, a beautiful dark blue castle slowly appearing before their eyes. The Queen managed a smile for the first time since she had left Arendelle, and Pitch couldn't help but enjoy himself. He had never created something so beautiful, and the truth of the matter made itself clear. He wasn't lying or manipulating Elsa when he told her that nothing went together better than cold and dark. Together, they were truly unstoppable. And before the third hour was over and his eyes glanced over the spectacular structure they had finished creating, he knew for sure. He had made the right decision in choosing Elsa.

"The place is looking pretty good, old friend." A smooth voice entered Pitch's ear. So he was here. Pitch smiled.

"Queen Elsa, I would like to introduce you to our new partner."

Elsa directed her gaze towards the unfamiliar form before allowing her body to go rigid. Her thoughts were swirling in her mind and the words readying themselves to spill out of her mouth were bitter.

"Prince Hans."

11. Chapter Ten: Kristoff

"I'm telling you, buddy, this is the right way!" Kristoff was getting irritated. Honestly, it was as if Sven believed he was an idiot or something. Granted, Kristoff _was_ kind of an idiot. He couldn't believe he had let his anger get the best of him like that. He should've never let Anna go out on her own. After all, she was right. It was stupid of him to think she wouldn't want to protect her family. He, for one, would do anything to protect Pabbie or Bulda. And so, after weeks of brooding, here he was- arguing with his reindeer about directions.

Sven chortled as if that was the single funniest thing he'd ever heard. The reindeer gave Kristoff a hard shove in the opposite direction, probing his best friend to turn around.

"Sven, no. I know what I'm doing. Who better to find Anna than her dashing fiance?"

Kristoff wasn't aware until that moment that it was physically possible for any living creature to laugh so hard. "Laugh all you want, but I have a hunch. She went this way, all right? I made this mess, so it's my job to fix it. I need to find Anna."

Sven sighed loudly, and plopped on the ground.

Kristoff rolled his eyes. "Stubborn old mule."

The pair went at it for a while, and eventually Kristoff got his way. Sven lazily followed behind his friend, occasionally attempting to convince the stubborn man to turn around, but to no avail. Kristoff continued to maintain that they were going the right way. That is, until they reached a massive ice castle in the middle of nowhere.

"No! No, no, no, no, this is- this is not good. I've done this before. No more ice castles." This was all too familiar. Kristoff had been to share of ice castles (well, one really, but that's still one too many) and it had not ended well. In fact, Kristoff was pretty sure that had ended with his fiance getting struck with ice. He didn't want the same thing to happen to him. Even worse, he had no idea what was inside that ice castle. Actually, Kristoff had a few ideas. He was just afraid he was right.

"Hey Sven, are you seeing this?" Kristoff couldn't tear his eyes away from the magnificent structure. It was even more beautiful than the last; a swirling mass of black and glistening blue. The sunlight danced across the delicate walls, mesmerizing the ice harvester and causing him to ignore the fear radiating from the palace. Elsa had created this, Kristoff was sure. When, and more importantly why, remained a mystery. "Sven, come on, look at this!"

Kristoff whirled around, finally noticing the sudden absence of his friend. "Sven?" The man glanced around, scanning the tree line for any sign of movement. Kristoff turned around once more, growing increasingly worried by the second. "Sven!"

In fact, Kristoff was so immersed in his worry he almost didn't see the fist flying towards him before he blacked out.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: Written in Winter is back! After a long hiatus, here is the long overdue chapter ten. It's a little short, but it's going to take a little while for me to get back into the groove of writing. I'll try and have the next chapter up within the week in hopes that will make up for my unintentionally long break. Thanks for sticking with me!</p>

End
file.